

To the most honourable the Lords and Commons in Parliament assembled : The humble Declaration and Petition of Major Geo. Wither.

Though a prayer of this length, is not usually preferred to your Honours, let it nevertheless appeare, for this once, excusable, in regard, the hardship of bearing, what occasions this tediousness, to exercise your patience in hearing, may perhaps, merit the more compassion.

Your said Petitioner, having long and patiently waited when the Publike-Affaires, would afford leisure to redresse his private-grievances; and, then, perceiving his many sufferings, to be almost past remedy; his family nigh destroyed; his life declining to the grave, and his just expectations every day further off then before; he began to consider, that, charity to himselfe, being the rule of regulating his love to others, ought not to be infringed; that workes of justice and mercy, should at no time be neglected, or seem impertinent; that, a generall-well-being is not possible where particulars and Individuals, (whereof a Generality consisteth) are needlessly exposed to destruction; and, that, no man is bound, silently, to suffer in, or for, that Common-wealth, which is so unequal in her Distributions, as not to administer, equally, deserved rewards and punishments, to her own Members; much lesse, when she will find Times to heare; Bread to feed; and Bowells to compassionate her malicious Destroyers; and, yet, hath neither Leisure, nor Food, nor Pitié for them, who thought nothing too precious, to be hazarded for her Preservation: And, your said Petitioner thereupon intended to expresse his Grievances, publikely, at large, and in such manner, as an unsufferable Oppression, joyned with Desperation of reliefe, might seem to require. But, having somewhat renewed his lost hopes, by discovering Symptomes of your removing those Obstructions, of justice and mercy, which of late, eclipsed the honour of the Parliament, frustrated the endeavours of her best affected Members, and oppressed her most faithfull Servants; he hath now changed his purpose; and humbly offers unto this high Court, an occasion of performing an Act of Justice, and a Work of Mercy, by imploring your favourable answer to his following Declaration and Petition; conceiving, it shall be a thing acceptable to God, honourable to the Parliament, and an Omen of a generall mercy to this Kingdome. Motives, to procure his humble Suit, he could alledge too many, to be here added; and, some of them are such, that, out of reverence to the honour of this Nation, he will not openly mention them, whilst he hath any hopes of redresse: And, yet, least the concealing of all, may render him, and his necessities, inconsiderable, till his destruction be irrecoverable, he humbly offers these that follow:

1. That, your said Petitioner hath not onely given publiket testimonies of his love to this Common-wealth, many years before this Parliament, or Army, appeared against her Oppressors; and hath continued constant to this Parliament, ever since it began, notwithstanding many provocations, occasioned by malignant Members: But, was the first also, (though without any particular encouragement) who, in those parts where he lived, contributed his goods, and ingaged his person, for the Publike-safety: And, that, he having frequent solicitations, and large offers from the contrary Party, did nevertheless proceed, and disburse, voluntarily, out of his owne estate and credit, above 700.l. in your greatest need; for which, he must pay interest, untill the principall is discharged; and, for part of which money (the same having already been owing above four yeares, he is now a Prisoner in the Gate-house, to his great charge and disgrace, who was never a Prisoner for any debt of his owne.

2. That, in the beginning of this warre, he was by speciall Order, plundered by the Kings Forces; and that, the honourable House of Commons, being certified, by an Inventorie testifying, under the hands of sixteen persons, that this Petitioners damages (as hath been since also averred by severall Oaths) amounted to above 2000.l. did thereupon, by their Order, of the 19. of February, 1642. charitably, authorize your said Petitioners repaire the said dammages, out of the estates of his Plunderers, and other Delinquents.

3. That, your said Petitioner, with humble thankfulness, and with due respect to the honour of the Parliament, endeavoured to execute the said Order; But, so discountenanced was he therein, Delinquents, so impudently befriended, and the said Order so slighted; that, he could not; thereby, recover halfe so much as the Interest of his principall damages, (as by Accompts upon Oath, and by Inventories of the particulars apprized, by sworn Apprizers, it doth, and may appeare) and, that, instead of the Repaire intended by the said Order, he is ingaged into so many troubles and suits, by seeking to execute the same; that, he who had never before one Suit in Law, hath now five suits, unjustly occasioned, meerly, by the said Order, to his intolerable charge and vexation.

4. That, by being plundered as aforesaid, he hath now been deprived almost five yeares both of his Stock, and of an Employment: wherey he cleared, and might probably have cleared, for sixteen yeares then to come, above 400.l. per annum, toward his maintenance, and the advance of his Estate, over and above all Rents and charges: And, that, by loosing the said Stock and employment, in your Service; and by the Oppressions sustained in seeking reliefe, by means of the foresaid Order, this Petitioner, hath not onely lost so much yearly profit; but, hath been thereby, compelled also, to borrow almost halfe so much, to maintaine his Family, and to pay Taxes, House-rent, and Duties, during most part of the said time.

5. That, there is likewise due to this Petitioner (as appeares by his Accompts stated in Febr. 1646.) above 1681.l. for Arreares, besides other just demands, amounting to 523.l. more then was certified by the Accomptants; all which ought to have been paid unto him above three yeares now past, and most part of it above foure yeares since, as will appeare by Debentures, and Warrants issued upon them by the late Generall Essex, and the Committee of Safety, according to the allowances and payments, then made to others. And there is now justly due to this Petitioner, above 4150.l. for Arreares, and Disbursements, which he is the more hopefull to receive, because if it were not better proved, then most other, it will ask no favour.

6. That, instead of what was graciously promised to such as had eminently suffered, and of what was charitably intended, by the honourable House of Commons, to this Petitioner, he hath been many waies injuriously oppressed, yea publikely, and fallly scandalized and misrepresented to the said House, to the occasioning of his being fined in 500.l. and of his confinement, to this day (being now almost a yeare and a halfe) by the unjust Report of one then sitting in the said House of Commons, and by the concurrence of others, (of whom some are now departed the Kingdome) who did then condemne the innocent, and justifie the offender, contrary to evidence; and to the disabling of your said Petitioner, to defend himself, who was not only thereupon disgracefully fined, & confined, as aforesaid, for having honestly discharged his duty; but, so impoverished also, that of above twenty horses (which he kept constantly, before his ingagement for the publike) he hath now, none; of eighteen household servants, he hath but one, which he is likewise unable to maintain; and, instead of many dishes at a meale, is faine to make many meales of one dish; which, at this present, also, he can hardly provide: yet, these are not the worst requitalls of his knowne faithfulness; as will appeare hereafter more at large, if there be cause.

7. That, your said Petitioner, having had for many years past, as aforesaid, neither Stocke nor Employment, whereby to maintaine his Family, or defend himselfe, against his powerfull scandalizers and oppressors, was forced (after he had borrowed, untill he was ashamed to borrow more) first, to sell, at low prizes, much of his most necessary goods; and afterward, that, which he would not have left, for ten times the value; even Jewels and Plate, given as testimonies of their respect, by the Queen of Bohemia, the late Datchesse of Richmond, and other honourable persons; and yet, had perhaps perished, if God had not moved a charitable Member of the House of Commons, to support him, hitherto, beyond hope.

8. Lastly, that, your said Petitioner, hath been imprisoned so long, for what the State owes; and suffered so much, by them, against whom the State ought to protect him; that, if he be not speedily relieved, he perceives no possibility of feeding his Family, one moneth longer; much lesse, of paying his Creditors, or avoiding the inconveniences, whereto hee shall be shortly liable, by not answering or prosecuting, according to the chargeable Formalities of Law and Chancery; and, whereby, he hath already suffered above 150.l. damage, through want of wherewith, to prosecute his right, and defend himselfe, as the said Formalities, require. In a word, he is totally ruined, meerly by his ingagements for you, and by Petitioning and attending, now above foure yeares, without redresse: his estate is so confused; his necessities are so many; his credit so impaired, by being clamor'd on, for trusting to the publike-faith, other mens goods, aswell as his own; and, his friends have hitherto been so few, or so unable: that, he knowes not which way to turn himself; nor, by what, he may fully illustrate his present condition, except by the distractions and confusions of this Kingdome, which, are epitomized in his: For, these lines containe not the tithe, of what, he can, and will further alledge, as motives of your commiseration, if there be cause.

In consideration, therefore, of what is already expressed; and in regard your said Petitioner hath now been wheeled about, in, and by References, and Committees, nigh foure yeares, as aforesaid, without other effect, save increase of scandalls, cost and troubles, which are likly to out-last the nigh expired terme of his life; and, whereby he is now disabled to toile any longer in those Labyrinths, which have made wiser men giddie, and some of them mad, both to the publike scandall, and their owne destruction; he humbly beseecheth your Honours, to set a period to his troubles; and not to expose him to those desperate courses, or expressions, which others have imprudently fallen upon, in lesse-sufferable extremities, to the dishonor of the Parliament, to the losse of the peoples affections thereunto, the prolonging of the generall calamity, and to the hazarding of all our happinesse. Be pleased, for preventing the ruine of his innocent children; the making of him a scorne to his Foes; a shame to the Nation; and a burthen to this Common-wealth, (whereto he might perhaps, be some way as serviceable, as many others, who have better thrived, by her undoing) to vouchsafe him, some part of those great sums, whereof others have shared: yea, for your owne honours sake, be pleased, according to the ancient Justice, and Clemency, of English Parliaments, and the many Religious Protestations made at the beginning of this, to take his necessities and faithfulness, into your speedy and serious consideration; and vouchsafe, that the money due to him for his Repaires, Disbursements, and his Arreares (the price of his blood) may be forthwith paid; or, at least, so much thereof, as may discharge his ingagements for the publike; being about 1400. l. and so much more, also, as may, once again, put him into some employment, for his subsistence, before, that, which he hath in hope, be quite wasted, by Usury, or his life, by time. And, be likewise pleased, to grant, that, the payment of the remainder, may be secured by an Ordinance, with interest for the same, untill the principall shall be discharged; or else, that in lieu of such Interest, some employment, (if he be thought worthy or capable of any, in this Kingdome) may be conferred upon him, whereby, without charge to the State, his Family may be fed, and his children educated, the meane while, by his owne labours. Herein, your Wisdom shall do an act of Justice, and a work of Mercy; which, as this Petitioner is perswaded, shall be improved to a blessing; redound as much to your honour, as, a free bounty, of greater sums, conferred; give good contentment to all the well-affected, who shall heare thereof; enable this Petitioner, to perform some future service, not altogether unworthy the desired favour; and make the whole Kingdome hopefull, that, those are, or, shall, suddenly (according to the generall desire) be purged out of both Houses, who have been the obstructers of Justice, and the prolongers of our present miseries. Howsoever it shall succeed, your said Petitioner will indeavour to rest contented with Gods good pleasure; to wait his leisure, as patiently as he can; and, to pray for this Parliament, as in duty he is bound.